

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

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CHAPTER XXXVII

THE cottage which Mrs. Romayne had taken for August and September, on Julian's refusal to go abroad, was situated a few miles above Henley. It was a very charming little house, to which the term "cottage" was applicable only in mock humility; and it was very charmingly situated. It had a delightful garden, not large, but full of "roses, and sunflowers, and all sorts of things," as Mrs. Romayne explained to Julian after her visit of inspection. Its lawns sloped down to the river, and altogether, on the same authority, it was a wonderful chance to get hold of it.

The statement which Mrs. Romayne had made to Lady Bracondale on Julian's authority, that there were "nice people about," had originated, as a matter of fact, not with Julian, but with his mother herself. It was quite true, nevertheless; but apparently Julian's sudden desire for quiet had proved infectious. For, the acquaintance between herself and her present neighbours being of the slightest, Mrs. Romayne made no such attempt as might have been expected of her to develop that acquaintance.

She seemed to be strangely without impetus in herself towards action of any kind. She was "resting" some people might have said; she was pausing, certainly. But whether, as the days went on, her life did not signify rather temporary and enforced quiescence, than the

peaceful and pleasant suspension of labour, might have been an open question.

It was a hot, bright August; day after day the sun shone steadily down, as Julian departed for town after an early breakfast, at which his mother never failed to appear. Day after day it shone through all the long, little-broken hours upon the quiet house and garden, about which the one woman's figure moved in almost total solitude, until, with the evening, Julian returned again. Evening after evening the mother and son spent alone, but by no means always together. After their dinner, during which conversation seldom flagged between them, any more than it would have flagged between two friendly and well-bred acquaintances, Mrs. Romayne would sit in the drawing-room with a bit of fashionable fancy-work in her hand, into which she only occasionally put a stitch; and sometimes Julian would spend half an hour with her there, reading the newspaper and carrying on the talk of dinner, or sometimes he would stroll out into the garden at once, and come in only just before bed-time.

Mrs. Romayne never followed him and never questioned him. Perhaps it was the curiously still life she had led which brought so strange and still an expression to her face—a stillness which suggested a slow, weary waiting, and a mingled concentration, watchfulness, and patience which sat strangely on the face which so few people had seen otherwise than vivacious and superficial.

It was an evening in the second week of September, and she was walking up and down the lawn in the fading sunset light. She was moving with slow, regular steps, with the monotonous motion of a woman to whom the even movement brought some

sort of relief or soothing. There was an indescribable touch of desolateness about her lonely figure as she moved up and down before the empty house.

A servant came out to her by-and-by with some newly-arrived letters. She took them, and then, her monotonous motion being perforce suspended, a sense of physical fatigue seemed to assert itself, and she sat down on a low basket-chair.

A sigh came from her as she did so, one of those sighs which in their unconsciousness are so suggestive of habitual suffering. She paused a moment, looking away into space with haggard, absent eyes. Then she seemed to rouse herself, and took up one of the letters as if forcing herself to seek relief from the current of her monotonous thoughts. She had opened the envelope and read the letter half through in a mechanical, uninterested way, when its contents seemed suddenly to arrest her attention. A change came to her expression, a change which in its slight quickening and revival showed how dulled, almost numbed, it had been before.

She turned once more to the beginning of the letter and read it again.

"DEAR MRS. ROMAYNE,—I am so sorry to have to ask you to postpone the visit which you had promised us for the end of this month. I find that by some stupid mistake my husband and I have given separate invitations for the same date. As there is, unfortunately, no doubt that his invitation was given first, there falls upon me the very disagreeable task of explaining the situation to you and your son, and begging you to forgive me. Yours truly,

"MARION STEWART."

Mrs. Romayne leant back in her chair, not indolently, but with a certain intent consideration in every line of her figure; and letting the hand that held the letter fall on her knee, she sat gazing at the written words with sharp, angrily-sparkling eyes, which looked as though they were bent on piercing through the words themselves to the meaning which she believed they hid. She was evidently surprised and annoyed; as evidently she gave not an instant's credence to the reason alleged for the postponement of the visit in question, and the slight involved in this postponement, indefinite, as she noticed with an unpleasant little smile, seemed to stimulate her.

Her face had grown sharp, and even

vindictive, when her eyes fell on the postmark of the second letter lying on her knee. It was that of the same little Scotch town, the name of which was stamped upon the already opened envelope. She took it up eagerly, and as she saw the handwriting, she paused for an instant, and a flash of intense consideration passed across her face. Then she tore it hastily open. It was from Mrs. Pomeroy, and it conveyed in three long-winded and incoherent sheets a piece of news which the writer was sure would delight Mrs. Romayne.

"Dear Maud," the letter said, was just engaged to "that charming Mr. Loring." Mrs. Pomeroy's mind seemed to be in a state of somewhat considerable confusion between a theoretical and conventional sense that it was very sad for her to lose her daughter, and a certain practical and actual sense, which by no means harmonised with the theoretical one, and all unconsciously threw a good deal of light on the relations between the mother and daughter as they actually existed. The coherence of the letter was further disturbed by sundry sentences, which dovetailed so oddly into the general fabric that they had somewhat the appearance of being inserted to order, and which conveyed various repetitions of "dear Maud's" assurance of Mrs. Romayne's congratulations, and various repetitions of the statement that Mr. Loring's financial position had recently improved amazingly, and that he was sure of a seat in Parliament at the forthcoming general election.

"He has been staying with the Stewarts during the whole of our visit to them," the letter ended. "Dear Lady Marion has been so kind about it, and taken such an interest."

"Ah!"

The exclamation, uttered evidently involuntarily, just above her breath, came from Mrs. Romayne's lips sharp and bitter. She had read the letter through with certain quick movements of her eyebrows, and little mocking smiles coming and going about her thin lips, and they smiled again as she folded the letter deliberately and put it back into its envelope. She was looking thoroughly roused now, and there was a vindictive confidence in her alert, determined, almost excited expression. It was the kindling up of martial spirit at a challenging trumpet-call from a well-known battlefield.

If Marston Loring and his future wife were indeed arranging their forces for the undermining of Mrs. Romayne's social position—and Miss Pomeroy and Loring between them could have pieced out a very sufficient explanation of Lady Marion Stewart's note—the campaign, judging from appearances at that moment, was likely to be far from a tame one.

Mrs. Romayne was still sitting with the letters in her hand, tapping one foot with impatient vigour upon the grass, and there was the same eager intentness in her eyes, when from the house behind her the sound of a dinner-bell rang out. She started violently, and in the start something seemed to fall between her and the subject on which her thoughts had been busy. A curious shade of that new stillness replaced the eager sharpness on her face. It was the dressing-bell, and she rose mechanically; and as she turned towards the house her eyes fell upon the figure of Julian. He had evidently been standing on the verandah, and as she rose he had turned, and was disappearing into the house. Another shade of stillness fell upon her face, as though the letters she had received, and the feelings they had stirred, had receded into the distance. There was nothing in her eyes now but a certain lurking, heart-sick anxiety, which never waned or lightened, and was not to be repressed.

It often happened that the mother and son did not meet, on Julian's return home in the evening, until dinner-time, and it happened so this evening. The dinner-bell was ringing when Julian came downstairs with a quick word or two of apology, and followed his mother into the dining-room.

Julian looked as though his month's hard work had by no means agreed with him. His face was even painfully thin and worn, and there was an expression of hard concentration about it which seemed to age it strangely. His eyes were haggard and rather sunken. It was a curious feature of a change in him less easily defined, that his likeness to his mother had faded considerably. All the character of his face now seemed to originate about his mouth—that mouth of which Mrs. Romayne had been wont to say with affected gaiety that it was like nobody in particular; that mouth which had been a somewhat weak and undecided feature. There was nothing undecided about it now, and Mrs. Romayne never looked at

it without a deepening of that stillness on her face. It was set into heavy, resolute lines.

No one, indeed, judging from the bare outline of Julian's daily life during that hot August, could have wondered at the signs of physical wear and tear that he exhibited. Ten o'clock, on every one of those sultry days, found him at work, not indeed in the Temple, but in an office in the City, and it was from the same office that he would issue forth at about five o'clock to catch the train for Henley, sometimes with sullen determination, sometimes with a pale, fierce excitement on his face.

The affairs of the Welcome Diamond Mine Company had readjusted themselves, after the blow which had threatened the company's very existence, as hardly the most sanguine could have hoped. Ten days after the announcement of the presence of water in the mine, some of the newspapers published another telegram which had been received by the directors. The passage of the water, by which the existing mine was rendered practically useless, had revealed hitherto unsuspected possibilities, and there appeared to be little doubt that the first mine had been, as it were, only a pledge of still richer strata yet to be worked. One telegram followed another, confirming the report in greater detail. Prospectuses were issued, setting forth a proposal to utilise the opportunity thus opened, and debentures were issued for the providing of the necessary funds. These debentures were taken up somewhat slowly at first, but on the arrival in England of specimens of diamonds from the new lead, together with a circumstantial report, they were taken up with a rush. Works were understood to be already on foot, and dividends were looked for at an early date. The new managing director of the company was Julian Romayne.

There was a kind of dry excitement about him to-night behind the deliberate assumption of conversational interest which was his never-changing manner with his mother now, and his hand shook a little as he poured himself out more wine than usual.

He did not rejoin his mother in the drawing-room, saying something as she left him about having letters to write; and two hours afterwards he was walking up and down the lawn in the moonlight with a cigar.

There was a fierce restlessness in his

step, and there was a fierce restlessness in his face, too. He had been walking there for half an hour when a shadow passed across the blind of the drawing-room window—the night was very hot and the window was wide open—and the blind was drawn up. Mrs. Romayne's figure stood there outlined by the lamplight within. The drawing-room window was shadowed from the moonlight by an angle of the house.

"Good night, Julian!" she called.

Julian stopped in his walk mechanically.

"Good night, mother!" he answered. The figure in the window seemed to hesitate for a moment; then Mrs. Romayne moved and drew down the blind, the lights in the room behind went out one by one, and Julian resumed his walk in the moonlight as mechanically as he had stopped it.

It was his custom to go every morning first to his room in the Temple in case any letters might be waiting for him there, and on the following morning, a slight accident on the line having considerably delayed his train, he paused a moment before giving his order to the cabman. He was very late, and there was a feverish impatience in every line of his face. He had almost decided that any private letters might wait until the next day, when, with a sudden unaccountable reaction, he sprang into the cab and told the man to drive to the Temple.

He had apparently repented of the resolution by the time the cab stopped, for he sprang out with a muttered imprecation on the delay. There was only one letter waiting for him, and he caught it up fiercely. Then the handwriting in which it was directed caught his eye.

All the tumultuous heat and impatience of his face died out suddenly and utterly. He stood for a moment staring down at the letter, white to the very lips. Then he seemed absolutely and physically to set his teeth, and in the intense hardness of determination which set its mark on every muscle of his face, his whole expression would have seemed to deteriorate, markedly and terribly, but for the desperation in his eyes which was little short of agony.

He moved abruptly, crossed the room, unlocked a drawer in his writing-table, and thrust the letter in with quick, deliberate movements, unopened. He locked the drawer again sharply, and turned and went hastily out of the room.

The letter was from Clemence; it was

the first sign of her existence which he had received since their parting on that June evening nearly three months ago.

He was looking only older, harder, and more recklessly resolute when about a quarter of an hour later he entered the office of the Welcome Diamond Mine Company. The feeble-looking little messenger was in solitary possession, and he looked up rather uneasily as Julian wished him a brief good morning and crossed to the door of the manager's room.

"Mr. Ramsay's just gone out, Mr. Romayne," he said. "I was to say he would be in again directly."

Julian made a curt gesture of assent and went on into the private room. There was plenty of work waiting for him, it appeared, and he was still applying himself to it with dogged concentration, when, nearly an hour later, the door opened and Ramsay appeared.

"There you are!" he said indifferently. "I thought you weren't going to turn up this morning."

Julian had just glanced up from the letter he was writing to acknowledge the other man's entrance, and he went on writing as he explained briefly that his train had been delayed.

"No particular reason for wanting me, I suppose?" he said in a brief, business-like way, as he laid down his pen.

Ramsay sat down deliberately, and put his hand into the breast-pocket of his coat.

"Well, yes," he said. "There's a matter here which rather calls for the attention of the managing director."

He held out a letter as he spoke, and Julian took it and read it quickly. Then he laid it down on the table before him, and looked up slowly at Ramsay. His face was rather pale.

"A general meeting of shareholders!" he said. "Demanding!"

There was a moment's pause, while he looked steadily into Ramsay's immovable face, and then he added in the same rather difficult tone:

"Did you expect this, Ramsay?"

"I never expect," returned Ramsay drily. "Such a thing was on the cards, of course."

Julian's face grew dark and calculating.

"Well," he said harshly, after another moment's pause, "it must be arranged for, of course. What do you propose?"

Ramsay answered the question by another.

"Do you happen to know anything," he said, "of a man named Compton—Howard Compton?"

Julian's brows contracted as if with an involuntary effort to detect the relevancy of the question as he answered tersely:

"Yes. He and I belong to the same club."

"You don't know, I suppose, that some shares in the 'Welcome' have drifted into his hands?"

Julian shook his head with a quick frown of vexation.

"Ah!" observed Ramsay; "they have, though. And it has come to my knowledge that various enquiries have been made into the state of the Welcome Diamond Mine; made on the spot, and made in secret. And I've traced these enquiries to this Mr. Howard Compton."

A dreadful grey pallor had begun to spread itself over Julian's face. And the muscles seemed to have grown rigid with the intense force with which he held them to their expression of dogged determination. He did not speak, and Ramsay went on in the same dry, indifferent way:

"He is either a very clever hand, or very cleverly advised. The one point we score at present is that he has not done as he intended to do, and taken us by surprise."

"Do you mean to say——"

The words seemed to come from between Julian's dry, white lips almost without consciousness on his part. His eyes were fixed upon Ramsay with a hard, unseeing kind of stare, his voice was hoarse, uneven, and hardly audible, and it died away leaving the sentence unfinished.

"The meaning is obvious, of course," returned Ramsay. "An affair of this kind is a ticklish thing to pull off, and a hitch of this kind is always possible, though I never came across an affair in which it seemed less probable. I don't know yet exactly how much our friend knows. The meeting won't be a particularly placid affair, of course, and you're likely to have a warm time of it. But, of course, there's a chance that he mayn't know quite enough, and we may be able to pull it through yet."

"And if not?"

Something seemed to rattle in Julian's throat as he spoke the words, and they came out thick and husky.

"If not?" repeated Ramsay. "Well, if not, I think I wouldn't go to that meeting if I were you."

There was a moment's dead silence, broken only by Julian's heavy, laboured breathing. The two men sat there face to face, and their eyes met with a terrible significance of what was better unexpressed in words. Then Ramsay's dull eyes took a deliberate survey of Julian's face. It was drawn and livid, and the elder man rose and took from the cupboard some brandy. He poured it into a glass with a slightly contemptuous smile, and put it into Julian's hand.

"You're the very devil to work," he said drily. "And for all I know you may be first-rate as a winner; but I can't say you're a good loser. And it's a useful lesson to learn in this business."

Julian drank the brandy and rose mechanically. The strong stimulant hardly seemed to touch the blanched horror of his face.

"What do you propose to do?" he said in a stiff, toneless voice.

"Personally, nothing," returned Ramsay, "until I know more. Business will go on as usual. You'll call the meeting, of course. I'll tell Harrison to get the forms ready for you to sign. They must be sent out to-morrow. Going?"

"Yes," said Julian heavily. "There's nothing more I need do to-day."

He took his hat and went slowly out of the office, looking straight before him like a man walking in his sleep. Ramsay looked after him, and stood for a minute rubbing his chin thoughtfully.

"Not quite what I thought he was," he said to himself; "though he has served this purpose well enough. Pity he hasn't a little more of his father in him. Got all the makings of the right sort, but he can't stay."

ACROSS THE POND.

THE latest additions to the splendid fleet of floating palaces which now race with something not far short of the speed of a railway train between Europe and America, recall to one's memory the memorable January morning in the year 1842, when Charles Dickens opened the door of a state-room "on board the 'Britannia' steam packet, twelve hundred tons burthen per register, bound for Halifax and Boston, and carrying Her Majesty's mails." Who has not revelled over the whimsicalities of that state-room, with its "very flat quilt covering a very thin mattress, spread

like a surgical plaster on a most inaccessible shelf" ? Some of us can easily see in the mind's eye this "utterly impracticable, thoroughly hopeless, and profoundly preposterous box," in such marked contrast to the chaste and pretty little bowers, sketched by a masterly hand, in the lithographed plans attached to the advertisements. Dickens regarded this "room of state" at first as a pleasant fiction, designed by the captain to give better enjoyment of the real state-room to be presently disclosed, and even to the last, its absurdities and discomforts were looked upon as a joke.

Then the saloon — the gorgeous apartment of which such high expectations had been raised. "A long, narrow apartment, not unlike a gigantic hearse, with windows in the sides, having at the upper end a melancholy stove, at which three or four chilly stewards were warming their hands, while on either side, extending down its whole dreary length, was a long, long table, over each of which a rack fixed to the low roof, and stuck full of drinking glasses and cruet-stands, hinted dismally at rolling seas and heavy weather."

Then the ladies' cabin, where they sat down round the fire, just to try the effect. It was rather dark, but somebody said "of course, it would be light at sea," and though nobody knew why, everybody believed and rejoiced. "I remember, too, when we had discovered and exhausted another topic of consolation in the circumstance of this ladies' cabin adjoining our state-room, and the consequently immense feasibility of sitting there at all times and seasons, and had fallen into a momentary silence, leaning our faces on our hands and looking at the fire, one of our party said with the solemn air of a man who had made a discovery: 'What a relish mulled claret will have down here !' which appeared to strike us all most forcibly, as though there was something spicy and high-flavoured in cabins which essentially improved the composition, and rendered it quite incapable of perfection anywhere else."

Crowds of people came down to the wharf to gaze with a kind of dread delight on "the far-famed fast American steamer," and the process of embarkation being finished, the vessel was hauled off into the stream to rest overnight. Next day our travellers go on board to begin their voyage. "There she is !" All eyes are turned to where she lies, dimly discernible through

the gathering fog of the early winter afternoon, and every finger is pointed in the same direction, and murmurs of interest and admiration, as "How beautiful she looks !" "How trim she is !" are heard on every side.

This was the vessel in which Charles Dickens made his first voyage to America with eighty-five fellow-passengers. On Saturday, the 22nd of January, an American pilot boat came alongside, and soon afterwards the "Britannia" steam packet from Liverpool, eighteen days out, was telegraphed at Boston."

The events of the voyage do not concern us here, but merely the duration of it, and the character of the ship in which it was made. For this same "Britannia" was the first vessel belonging to the Cunard Steamship Company, and the first steamer to begin the great Transatlantic mail and passenger service, although not the first steamer to cross the Atlantic. We shall not recall the doings of the "Sirius" and "Great Western," of the "Savannah" and "Royal William," as these were pioneers only.

The Cunard Company was formed in 1839, and their first steamer, the "Britannia," began her first voyage in February, 1840. She had thus been running just two years when Charles Dickens crossed in her, and the fare was — according to the advertisements of 1840 — "Passage, including provisions and wine, to Halifax, thirty-four guineas ; to Boston, thirty-eight guineas ; steward's fee, one guinea." And now after fifty years we have the two new monsters, "Campania" and "Lucania," alongside of which the "Britannia" would look but a toy.

Following the "Britannia" and her sisters, "Acadia," "Caledonia," and "Columbus," came, at various intervals, steamers famous in their day and still remembered even in this generation. Thus, in 1848, were added the "Americas," "Niagara," "Canada," and "Europa" (all after the traditional custom of the Company with territorial names ending in "a"). In 1851 appeared a larger and more powerful type in the "Asia" and "Africa," of one thousand indicated horse-power, and steaming twelve knots an hour. All the boats of the Cunard Company were of wood down to 1856, when the "Persia" appeared as the first iron steamer to bear the flag. She was of the then immense tonnage of three thousand three hundred tons, was three hundred and eighty feet long by

forty-five feet broad, and had engines of four thousand horse-power, driving her at a speed of thirteen and a half knots an hour. But although of iron, the "Persia," like her sister ship, the "Scotia," was a paddle-boat, or what the Americans call a side-wheeler. These two vessels were the last of the Cunard paddle-steamers, and, indeed, the "Scotia" has of late years been converted into a twin-screw, in which altered form and under another flag she does duty as a telegraph-ship.

With the "China," the Cunard in 1862 began the new era of iron screw-boats. The "China" was not so large as the "Scotia," nor did she average more than twelve knots an hour, but she is memorable as marking a turning-point in the history of the fleet. To her followed, in 1867, the "Russia," a longer boat of over three thousand tons, designed to carry on the Express Service along with the "Scotia," and for long one of the most popular boats on the Atlantic, although she was soon outdone in speed by rivals of other lines. All the next successors of the "Russia" in the Cunard fleet were iron screws, and such names as the "Parthia," "Algeria," "Abyssinia," "Bothnia," and "Scythia" recall to many of us the memory of handsome vessels, each regarded as the most perfect type of her day. The size went on increasing, until in 1881 we find the renowned "Servia"—like all the rest of the fleet, built on the Clyde—of no less than eight thousand five hundred tons, measuring four hundred and seventy-eight feet in length and fifty-two feet in breadth, and propelled by engines of ten thousand horse-power.

The "Servia," again, marked another new departure—the race of express steamers built exclusively for passenger traffic, and with only a side glance for incidental cargo. The tremendous machinery required for the modern Atlantic racers, and the enormous quantity of coal required to feed them, take up so much space that even in the biggest of them there is little room for cargo. Then further, the "Servia" was a novelty in being the first Cunarder built of steel, a material which has been used for all her successors.

The "Aurania," which came out in 1882, marked an alteration in the type of hull, the breadth being greater in proportion to length than in the preceding vessels.

Both the "Servia" and the "Aurania,"

however, were outdone in speed by the "Oregon," a Clyde-built boat flying the Guion flag, which the Cunard Company proceeded to purchase. She had a short but brilliant career, during which she reduced the Atlantic passage to six and a half days, and was unfortunately sunk by a collision off Fire Island in March, 1886.

Meanwhile still bigger and swifter boats than the "Oregon" had appeared, in the "Umbria" (1884) and the "Etruria" (1885), both built by the builders of the famous "Atlantic Greyhounds"—"Alaska," "Arizona," and "Oregon"—the Fairfield Shipbuilding Company, Glasgow. These two monsters are of about eight thousand tons each, measuring five hundred feet in length by fifty-seven feet in breadth, and with engines of fourteen thousand five hundred horse-power, developing a speed of nineteen knots. With these vessels the Cunard Company reduced the outward passage, from Queenstown to New York, to a few minutes under six days and two hours, and the homeward passage to a few minutes over six days and three hours.

But even these records were broken by the Inman "City of Paris," in 1889, and the White Star "Teutonic," in 1891, which last vessel brought down the outward record to five days and sixteen hours. As it is to beat the "Teutonic" and her beautiful sister "Majestic" that the Cunard Company have made their latest effort, it should be mentioned that these are twin-screw boats of nine thousand eight hundred tons, measuring five hundred and sixty-six feet in length by fifty-seven and a half in breadth, and having engines of no less than seventeen thousand five hundred to eighteen thousand horse-power, which develop a speed of twenty knots an hour. In point of size, however, they are outdone by the Inman liners "City of Paris" and "City of New York," twin-screw boats of ten thousand five hundred tons, with engines of eighteen thousand five hundred horse-power. The Inman boats were the first to apply the principle of the twin-screw, and the "City of Paris" it was that first broke the six-day record.

The recent launches of the "Campania" and "Lucania" were events of extreme interest in the mechanical and shipping world, for no vessels so large and heavy have been put into the water since the "Great Eastern." The launching of that Leviathan, it may be remembered, occupied nearly three months, occasioned serious

injury to numbers of work-people, was destructive of much gear and machinery, and cost about one hundred and twenty thousand pounds, which, added to the initial cost of the vessel, completely exhausted the finances of the Company. Such has been the advance in mechanical science since those days of disaster, that the "Campania" glided into the water at the exact moment appointed, doing precisely what she was intended and expected to do, and leaving the "ways" in the great yard at Fairfield as gently and compliantly as a ten-ton cutter. And so with the "Lucania" a few months later. The successful launching of these giant vessels is in itself reckoned among the engineering triumphs of our time.

The weight of each of them as it entered the water—that is, the mere shell, without engines, boilers, or heavy fittings—could not be less than nine thousand tons. They were built at an acute angle to the river, which is very narrow at Fairfield, so that they might have a long slant as they left terra firma for the channel scooped out for them by dredgers. The enormous amount of nice calculation required to adjust chains, stays, checks, and all the other appliances, would seem incredible to a builder of the olden time.

And what does the "Campania" represent, after all, now that she is completed? Well, for one thing she represents the highest achievement in naval architecture and marine engineering at present in the world. She embodies the great thought, and labour, and experience, and inventive genius of half a century of ceaseless evolution. In a commercial sense, she expresses the strength of combined capitalistic effort. In a social sense she responds to the hurry and luxury of the age in which we live.

In the days of her famous ancestor, the "Britannia," men were well content to be transported from hemisphere to hemisphere in a fortnight, and the "Britannia" did not do so very much better than the crack sailing-clippers of the Old Black Ball, Dramatic, and other lines, some of which did the run under canvas eastward in seventeen days, and westward in twenty-two days; but, of course, they were dependent on the winds. Nowadays, however, men complain if they cannot get across within a week, and if the "Campania" develops the speed of twenty-three knots an hour that is expected of her, they will be able to get from Queens-

town to New York in little over five days—or, say, in about five and a half days from London.

Whether there is need for such haste is another question. On general principles one would say that a few hours more or less on a journey occupying several days cannot be of much consequence. But in practice it is. We live in an age of high pressure and high speed, when, more than ever it was, time is money. Those who have the money and grudge the time will always travel by the quickest method of conveyance open to them. Hence the reign of express trains with their natural corollary in the race of express steamers. The race is to the swift, and that the race is worth winning one is bound to infer from the persistent effort of each competing Transatlantic company to outstrip its rivals.

The rivalry is not in speed alone, but tends to the perfection of the type in comfort and luxury. The nearest analogy to the Transatlantic express steamer on land is a first-class hotel of the latest style. This ocean development is more probably due to the rapid accumulation of wealth in the hands of restless Americans than to the pressure of British requirements. We are as fond of rapid transit as our cousins, but we have always thought more of comfort than of luxury in travel. Not so the rich American, who desires always to be surrounded by evidences of his own wealth. In the old days of the clippers and the early steamers, very few Americans came to Europe, even for business, and nearly all the passenger-carrying was from east to west. Now the stream of emigration from our shores has practically ceased to flow, and the great majority of ocean passengers both ways are Americans. They come over here to spend their leisure—and their money—much more freely and frequently than we go over to them. The modern ocean liner may be regarded as the triumph of British skill and enterprise called forth by the demands of American wealth and restlessness.

Take the "Campania," for instance, not only the largest and swiftest, but also the most sumptuous and luxurious of any steamer entered for the ocean race. In point of size she is only some sixty feet or so shorter than the "Great Eastern," while her horse-power—thirty thousand—is about five times greater. The "Great Eastern" had one set of paddle-wheels and one screw; the "Campania" has two screws.

The "Great Eastern" was long and ugly, with a bewildering collection of funnels and masts ; the "Campania" is a model of beauty, designed on the most perfect lines a naval architect could desire. She has only two funnels—though they are big enough for a railway train to run through—and a couple of slender masts, to add finish rather than to spread canvas.

She does not seem so very big until you get on board of her, and see the great stretch of deck, the enormous sides, the interminable tiers and rows of cabins, and, above all, the tremendous size of her machinery. Her length is six hundred and twenty feet, that is to say, very nearly the eighth of a mile, so that the energetic passenger who must do his "mile before breakfast" has only to take four turns from stem to stern to make his record, and while he is doing his duty mile at the regulation pace, the steamer will have taken him six miles nearer his destination, driving him through the water with all the combined power of thirty thousand horses.

Horse-power, perhaps, is a kind of force too technical to be understood by non-experts, but what everybody can grasp is the fact that the "Campania's" engines are just half as powerful again as those of the renowned "City of Paris."

There is accommodation in her vast interior for four hundred and sixty first-class passengers, two hundred and eighty second-class, and seven hundred steerage passengers, besides a crew of four hundred ; and for one thousand six hundred tons of cargo, besides the enormous supplies of coal and stores required for her engines and company. There are six decks, and all but the lowermost one are devoted to the accommodation of passengers and their attendants.

The dining-saloon is spacious enough to seat four hundred and thirty diners ; it is mounted in rich, old carved mahogany ; it is decorated in ivory and gold, it is lighted by electricity, and it is upholstered in dark russet velvet. From the centre of it, to afford light, rises a "well" right through the drawing-room above and up to the upper deck, a height of over thirty feet.

The drawing-room is mounted in carved and relieved satinwood, artistically upholstered, with arched mirrors, carved mantelpieces, tiled hearth—everything to please the cultured eye and the languid body.

In nothing, however, is the advance more marked, and the "note" of the time more pronounced, than in the bed-chambers or state-rooms. They are so beautifully furnished, so light, so spacious, so free from the general appearance of "shipiness" which pervades one's "berth" even in the best ships, that it will be difficult to believe one is afloat on the ocean wave, when luxuriating on one of the brass bedsteads of the best rooms, or stepping for one's bath-slippers on the velvet pile carpet which covers the floor. Then a new thing is the establishment of rooms "en suite"—complete sets of splendid apartments, in which a family or a party can seclude themselves as luxuriously as in the most perfectly appointed hotel.

But the trail of the serpent—the smell of the ship—that indescribable, impalpable, but heretofore always-present and never-to-be-forgotten odour, is it not still perceptible over all the elegance and beauty ? No, for double casings, filled in with non-conductors, separate all the passenger spaces from engine-room and other places necessary to the working of the vessel, but not always agreeable to the senses of hearing and smell.

We might say much about the marvellous character of the engines—the most powerful machines of the "triple-expansion" type yet constructed. Two sets of engines are required to drive the two screws, and these engines are fed by twelve huge boilers fired by ninety-six furnaces. But that is not all. There are powerful engines, of the latest construction, for reversing, for steering, for the electric light, for the refrigerating chamber, for the condensers, for the heating pipes, for the pumps, for the cranes and winches, for all sorts of purposes, making the huge interior in which the machinery is housed like a series of great engine-shops.

These, then—for the "Lucania" is the same—are the latest types of ocean steamers, the lineal descendants of the homely old "Britannia," the mighty and beautiful daughters of a lowly but worthy parent. It has taken fifty years to bring them forth. What will be the type fifty years hence, when our children's children look with a kind of amused interest upon the portraits and descriptions of the monsters which are now exciting our admiration and our wonder ? Well, let them smile, the "Campania" is good enough for us in the meantime.

SOME FORGOTTEN NOVELISTS.

THE immortals in literature are few, the transients are many. Many of those who were once widely read and loudly applauded have now dropped into oblivion, while others who, while they lived and wrote, were neglected and despised, are now classed among the *di majores* of the literary Olympus. In no section of literature are there fewer masters and a greater mob of more or less facile scribblers than in fiction. Many living novelists, whose names are as household words in the mouths of Mr. Mudie's subscribers, and whose bank-books are in a thoroughly healthy condition, must surely sometimes feel a pang when they reflect how short-lived is the popularity of most writers of fiction; how few artists in prose, as in verse, are not of an age but for all time; and how slender are their own particular chances of earning fame which shall outlast their own day and generation.

Of the novelists of the past, how many are now but names to the few who take an interest in literary history, while by the general reading public they are completely forgotten. The permanent representatives of the fiction of the eighteenth century are Defoe, Fielding, Smollett, Richardson, Goldsmith, and, perhaps, Miss Burney; but there were many others upon whose pens the world of readers once hung enraptured. Mrs. Aphra Behn and Mrs. Haywood would now be classed as hopelessly improper, and, still worse, intolerably dull. Even in their own time, although they were not accused of being dull, and were certainly widely read, the morality of their books was not universally admired. In the "Dunciad," Pope describes the latter of the two ladies as one of "those shameless scribblers who, in libellous memoirs and novels, reveal the faults or misfortunes of both sexes, to the ruin of public fame or disturbance of private happiness."

Later in the century, the novel had become a more popular form of literature, and many writers flourished who are now forgotten. The school of romance, originated by the success of Horace Walpole's "Castle of Otranto," enjoyed a short hey-day of popularity. Mystery and horror were its watchwords—mystery and horror which would now fail to raise a single hair on the most excitable of craniums. "The Bravo of Venice," "The Castle Spectre,"

"The Mysteries of Udolpho"—such were the titles of the blood-curdling works that for a time were eagerly devoured.

Heroes and heroines were mixed up with dark and horrible secrets, and much uncanny action of a very stagey kind; but the taste for romantic castles, mysterious corridors, spectres solemnly stalking to the accompaniment of the clank of chains, and all the rest of the absurd machinery and impossible "mise-en-scène," was soon sated; and the names of Mrs. Radcliffe, "Monk" Lewis, and Clara Reeve, became "to dumb forgetfulness a prey."

The more legitimate novel was cultivated by many men and women of letters who are now but little known and never read. Even the "Man of Feeling," by Henry Mackenzie, which was once in every one's hands, has rested undisturbed for several generations, until, in the present rage for reproducing the works of the past, a publisher has been found enterprising enough to venture a reprint in luxurious "get up" of what was a century ago regarded as the masterpiece of the "Addison of the North"; while as regards Robert Bage, Mrs. Inchbald, Charlotte Smith, and others of that time, it may safely be said that their books are now known only to literary antiquaries. Yet their success at the time of publication was great. Hannah More's "Cœlebs in Search of a Wife" went through eight editions in about as many weeks; and a very dull performance it is. Lamb borrowed a copy to read, and, with his unfailing critical acumen, described the story to Coleridge as "one of the very poorest sort of common novels, with the drawback of dull religion in it. Had the religion been high and flavoured, it would have been something." He returned the borrowed book to the lender with the following lines inscribed therein, by way of expressing his contempt for the work and its author:

If ever I marry a wife
I'll marry a landlord's daughter;
For then I may sit in the bar,
And drink cold brandy and water.

The eight editions in eight weeks would seem hardly credible had not De Quincey let us into the secret of how it was managed. In his recollections of Hannah More, he specially mentions the phenomenal success of "Cœlebs," and says that the book was widely bought "for no other reason than because some startling amount of editions had already been sold in London." De Quincey then proceeds to

explain that the first three editions, which operated, he says, by their rapid sale, as the decoy editions to the public, and which were probably not very large, had been really bought almost exclusively by distinguished friends of the author, who for months before had been diligently canvassed, and had bespoken their copies before publication. The sale of so many editions—it was not necessary to specify the number of copies of which an edition consisted—in so short a time, attracted the attention of the book-buying world, and the success of the novel was assured. Some books of this period do not altogether deserve the neglect into which they have fallen. One, at least, of Mrs. Inchbald's tales—"Nature and Art"—is worth reading; and some of Mrs. Charlotte Smith's stories are not unworthy of the popularity which they once enjoyed, and have been praised by many good judges.

The present century has produced a bewildering number of novelists of every grade of merit. The greater number may be regarded as condemned to oblivion from the moment of publication. Having never enjoyed the breath of public favour, even in a small degree, they cannot be considered, from the literary point of view, as having lived at all. Of the minority, there are the few whose names are known to all men, and whose books are still read; while the remainder are those who have enjoyed a certain vogue for a longer or shorter period, but have been found lacking in staying power, and in the race for fame have fallen back into the indistinguishable ruck of mediocrities. In some cases the failure is not to be wondered at, but in others the pity of it lies in the fact that to a large extent the failure is undeserved. A striking example of oblivion overtaking the wrong man is the fate of John Galt. It was unfortunate that the publication of his best and most characteristic works coincided, in point of time, with that of the most famous of the *Waverley Novels*. The *Wizard of the North* was master of all hearts, and it was difficult for any reputation to escape being overshadowed and eclipsed to some extent by the vast popularity of Sir Walter Scott.

Galt's "*Ayrshire Legatees*"—the first of the books by which he deserves to be remembered—was published serially in "*Blackwood's Magazine*," and was attributed by more than one critic to the author of "*Waverley*." It was followed by

the "*Annals of the Parish*," "*The Eatson*," "*The Provost*," and other stories illustrative of life and character in the West of Scotland during the latter part of the last century. Of these books the "*Annals of the Parish*" is decidedly the best. Galt's portraits are graphic and life-like, and his character-drawing is discriminating and highly finished. Incident and story are not lacking, but they are subordinated to what is evidently the main object of the writer—the presentation of an absolutely faithful picture of Scottish life and character. "His ministers, his magistrates, his landed proprietors, his merchants, his mechanics, his clowns," it has been well said, "are all portraiture, not so much of individuals as of classes; so minutely, faithfully, and graphically reflected, and so imbued with vitality, that although the local circumstances and situations which tended to mould them into their peculiar phases have now passed away, or scarcely left a trace of their whereabouts, they must ever continue to be regarded, not only as pictures of national manners, genuine transcripts of Scottish life, and domestic illustrations of the historical events of a particular era, but as throwing light upon the combinations of thought and feeling to which these events owed their origin; for what is national character but the general results brought about by the operation of national peculiarities?" Such praise is high, but well-deserved. Yet it is to be feared that to English readers, at least, Galt is little more than a name, which must be classed among those of forgotten novelists.

Another writer of fiction, of lower rank than Galt, who was highly popular in the early years of the century, was Sydney Owenson—Lady Morgan—who may perhaps be still known to a few readers as the author of "*The Wild Irish Girl*," a racy Hibernian story, first published in 1801, which went through seven editions in two years. Lady Morgan followed up this success with a considerable number of novels, all very popular in her day, but now completely forgotten. One of these stories—"The Novice of St. Dominic"—was one of the last books read by William Pitt. It became known that the Great Commoner had declared himself unable to put the book down until he had finished it, and the "*Novice*" forthwith became the rage. Library subscribers fought for it; it was the universal subject of conversation; and even the fame of her previous book, "*The Wild Irish Girl*," was

eclipsed. Yet who now reads, or has read, "The Novice of St. Dominic," which so fascinated the great statesman?

A little later than Lady Morgan, among the smaller fry of writers of fiction who flourished between the setting of Scott and the rising of Dickens, were one or two who must be classed as practically forgotten novelists, although their names are still familiar enough in other connections. There is, for instance, John Gibson Lockhart. His life of Sir Walter is, of course, a classic; and his name is also remembered as a not undistinguished editor of the "Quarterly Review," and translator of Spanish ballads; but as a novelist he is now unknown. Yet "Adam Blair," "Matthew Wald," and others were deservedly popular in their day. Lockhart was master of one of the prime requisites for a great writer, a good style—"clear, direct, and nervous," as Carlyle described it—but his fiction, interesting and well-written as it undoubtedly is, seems just to have missed that saving salt of distinction which might have preserved its vitality. Theodore Hook, again, is still a familiar name. His jokes are quoted and fathered upon other people, just as innumerable jokes made by other people are fathered upon him; his unfortunate career is still used to point a moral and adorn a tale; as a wit and bon vivant he has his niche in our social history, but his fiction is practically forgotten. The "Quarterly Review," venturing into the perilous paths of prophecy, once remarked that "after many clever romances of this age shall have sufficiently occupied public attention, and sunk, like hundreds of those of former generations, into utter oblivion, there are tales of his which will be read with, we venture to think, even greater interest than they commanded in their novelty." Literary prophecy is always rather foolish, and in this particular case there does not appear to be much prospect of the prediction being fulfilled. "Mrs. Ramsbottom" is still used as a kind of synonym for Mrs. Malaprop, but probably few of those who use it remember that it was the signature of Hook to a series of letters, in absurdly bad spelling, published in "John Bull" in 1829; and as regards the novels, does any one now read "Jack Brag," or "Gilbert Gurney," or "Sayings and Doings," or others of the family? We doubt it.

In the thirties and forties one of the

most popular of lady novelists was Mrs. Gore. Her stories of fashionable life had then a great vogue; but no writer of fiction is more completely forgotten by present-day readers than Mrs. Gore. In one book, called "The Cabinet Minister," the scene is laid in the time of the Regency, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan appears among the characters. In another—"Cecil, or the Adventures of a Coxcomb"—there are descriptions of London club-life, which were said to have been supplied by William Beckford, famous as the author of "Vathek" and owner of the treasures of Fonthill. Devices of this kind may secure a temporary popularity for inferior fiction, but cannot ensure permanent fame. Another prolific lady novelist, whose works are now unread, was Mrs. Bray. Her books on Devonshire legends and popular stories are of lasting value; but of her long array of novels, not one can be said to hold a permanent place in literature. With Mrs. Gore may be paired Lady Blessington, who wrote a large number of stories of the fashionable life of her day. She wielded a facile pen, and touched the follies and humours, the fashions and modes of thought, of the hour with a light and brilliant touch; yet oblivion has overtaken her books. Her novels are unread and forgotten, and she herself is remembered chiefly, if not only, on account of her relations with the brilliant array of men, distinguished in politics and famous in literature and art, who once thronged the saloons of Gore House.

The forgotten novelists of this period, however, were not all women. In the list of writers of fiction whose works have been unable to escape the tooth of Time, a place must be found for Robert Plumer Ward. He took himself, and was taken by his contemporaries and friends, very seriously, both as a politician and as a writer. His "Memoirs," with selections from his correspondence, diaries, and unpublished literary remains, were published in two large volumes in 1850. Ward's first novel was issued anonymously in 1825 under the title of "Tremaine." In it the writer made the attempt, always bound to fail, to combine fiction with the discussion of philosophical and religious problems. The book had the temporary popularity often gained by works of this kind. It, and its possible author, supplied a topic for tea-tables and dinner-parties, and the author was the recipient of many flattering encomiums; but it could have no future.

Philosophical and theological points of view are continually changing; the conditions and methods of discussion which are of intense interest at one time, are a few years later as completely out of date as mediæval geography; and the book that depends for the main part of its interest on such discussion is consequently doomed to oblivion, a fate which has surely overtaken "Tremaine." The same may be said of "De Vere," which two years later followed "Tremaine." In his second novel, Ward made politics a leading feature; but political discussions do not conduce to longevity in fiction, any more than philosophical or theological disquisition.

Yet one more novelist may be mentioned in the list of the forgotten, whose name must be included therein with as much regret as that of John Galt. James Hannay was a writer who has hardly received due justice. His first novel, "Singleton Fontenoy, R.N.," published when he was only twenty-three, was welcomed by George Henry Lewes as a "remarkable work," displaying "the exuberance of youth, and the promise of a ripe maturity." Carlyle read it with so much pleasure that he asked the young author to call upon him, and was eloquent in praise of the life of a sailor—a profession which Hannay had followed before taking to literature. "Singleton Fontenoy" was followed by several other novels and collections of sketches, which were popular and much appreciated at the time; but they appear to have failed to maintain their ground. Hannay's work, good as it was, was yet in the second class only; and nowadays the literature of the past is so overborne by the flowing and rising tide of the literature of the present, that only the books of the first class, the really great, outstanding works, whose distinction is universally recognised, have any chance of gaining the attention of most latter-day readers. There will always, however, be a few who will hold lightly by the present and be mindful of the riches of the past; and by such as these, Hannay's "Singleton Fontenoy," and Galt's "Annals of the Parish," will long be regarded as cherished possessions.

THE OLD ROADS TO BRIGHTON.

IT is only by courtesy that we can give the title "old" to any of the roads to Brighton. For, although of some impor-

tance as a fishing town from an early period, Brighton, or Bright Hampton, or Bremston, as it was indifferently called, was almost unknown to London people till the fashion of sea-bathing was first established about the middle of the eighteenth century, or when Dr. Richard Russell "discovered" Brighton in the year 1750, from which time the place flourished greatly, and is described in 1766 as "frequented by the gay and polite, and one of the chief watering-places of the coast." In those days the main-road to Brighton was by Dorking, Horsham, and Steyning, a very picturesque and charming route, which might be adopted with advantage by any one driving or walking, with time to spare, towards the Sussex coast. What pleasant glimpses of rich country, open downs, spreading woods, with parks, plantations, and lovely country seats innumerable, one gains in a drive through Ewell, Epsom, Leatherhead, with its rich bits of river scenery on the "sullen," or rather placid, Mole! Burford Bridge, and the really noble pass between the great buttresses of the North Downs, bring you to cheerful Dorking, and so to the rich levels of the Sussex Weald.

From Horsham the coach driver or the cyclist would choose as the best road with the easiest gradients the way by Cowfold, Henfield, and Pyecombe, through a rich and pleasant country without remarkable features, but the old highway follows the more picturesque route by West Grinstead, where there is a fine church, through the pleasant village of Ashurst, and then to Steyning, one of the nicest of Sussex towns, with many quaint old houses, gabled and with overhanging fronts, and a famous old grammar school, the buildings of which are of great picturesqueness and interest. Half-way up the high street is the old town clock, and the belfry in which hangs the town alarm-bell, with a chain and handle hanging within reach that any one may tug at on the alarm of fire, but where a warning notice suggests fine or imprisonment for false alarmists on the prosecution of "the town commissioners for lighting."

The old highway leads past the church, which boasts a fine Norman nave, with massive columns and round arches enriched with mouldings of many curious forms, and there is a fine chancel arch of the same early period. About a mile further on we come to Bramber Castle, with its magnificent earthworks crowned

by a few broken, ivy-covered walls, now almost overgrown with trees and shrubs. On the height beyond, the modern Lancing College, with its still unfinished chapel, shows impressively against the sky. From here the way descends to Old Shoreham, and past its fine old Norman church, and at Shoreham we come upon the tramway, on which we are bowled pleasantly along by the long river haven, with the masts of trading-ships and the funnels and spars of steam-yachts and sailing-yachts showing against the hazy sea-front of Brighton.

By this ancient and pleasant route plied the first pair-horse coaches in 1798 and also the earlier eight-horse fly waggons which carried merchandise and passengers between London and the coast. Pack-horses in strings picked their way along the miry Sussex roads, the best of which were often impassable in the winter months. By this road travelled the great actors of the period, the Kembles, the Siddons, and Edmund Kean, with Matthews, Munden, and the chief comedians of the early part of the century. The same road was traversed by pretty Mrs. Thrale, the great brewer's wife, with clever Fanny Burney crowned with the laurels of Evelina, and ponderous but susceptible Samuel Johnson like a tame bear led in silken chains. And the Thrales might claim a sort of historic connection with the Brighton Road. For as Manning tells us : "The Surrey new roads were first lighted and watched on the evening of Michaelmas Day, 1764, and continued in winter to this time, owing to Mr. Thrale, M.P. for Southwark, having been twice robbed in going from the House of Commons by this road to his house in the Boro'. After the second robbery he always took two soldiers to guard him, and they were among the first watchmen appointed."

An alternative route to Brighton, and perhaps the most ancient of all, started from close by Mr. Thrale's brewery—now Barclay and Perkins'—beginning at Stone End in Blackman Street, Southwark, and running by Brixton, Streatham, and East Grinstead to Lewes, whence a track-way over the downs led to the then insignificant Brighton. The first part of this road was traversed by Defoe in the seventeenth century, who mentions it as "admirably good," and calls it the great Sussex Road. One of the earliest turnpike Acts, 1718, deals with the road as far as East Grinstead. Before that time the roads across the

great Surrey and Sussex weald had been execrably bad and often impassable for wheeled vehicles, although the legislature had taken them in hand as early as in the reign of Henry the Eighth. At that time the bad roads were attributed to the heavy traffic from the ironworks in the weald, and the chief burden of repairing the roads—by the rough process of emptying so many cartloads of cinder, gravel, stone, or chalk into the yawning sloughs of despond—was cast upon the iron-masters. But the iron industry disappeared from its ancient seat, and still the roads were no better, till the general establishment of turnpike trusts and the heavy tolls levied on an ever increasing traffic brought about a partial reformation, although in a wasteful, burdensome way.

The increasing popularity of Brighton as a seaside resort received a tremendous fillip from the fancy that the Prince Regent—as it is convenient to call him, although he visited Brighton long before he was Regent—took to the place, and soon the necessity was felt for a more direct route to the scene of so much gay and fashionable life. And hence was pieced together the direct highway to Brighton by Reigate and Cuckfield, described by Shergold in his recollections as "the Appian way for high nobility."

Now, where the high nobility went the commonalty in general were sure to follow, and with these we may take our place in the pair-horse coach that started from the "Blossoms," Laurence Lane, at seven a.m. The "Cock" at Sutton was reached by nine, of which there is a capital sketch by Rowlandson in his excursion to Brightelmstone. We see the low snug inn beyond the wide-stretching toll bar, the vehicles drawn up at the door, the footsore pedestrians tramping along, the high nobility, and the chaise and four. Then the road passes over Banstead Downs, once famous for its flocks, as Pope records : To Hounslow Heath I point, and Banstead Down, Thence comes your mutton, and these chicks my own.

On the downs stands a lonely inn, the "Tangier," built by Admiral Buckall from the spoils of the Moors, and famous for its elderberry wine. The Prince always takes a glass of it from the fair hands of Miss Jeal, and of course the pair-horse coach must loyally follow the Prince's example, both insides and out. At Reigate we must have luncheon—the Prince lunches or dines at the "White Hart," at Reigate—and

again the pair-horse coach is faithful to Prince. While the table is being prepared the passengers are conducted to the Barons' Cave, under Reigate Castle, where the Barons mustered about the Magna Charta business. No one is now invited to visit the cave, at threepence a head, but it is a curious crypt and cavern, and certainly would hold the whole baronage of the United Kingdom, more numerous now than in King John's days.

So far all has been plain sailing, but now it is an affair of crossing the plain of Andred's Weald, here perhaps at its narrowest, but still ten miles across. And this ten miles between Reigate and Crawley, anciently through forest and swamp, but now one of the best stretches of road to be found anywhere about, was the subject of anxious care as early as 1696, when a raised causeway was made between the two places, but intended only for pack animals and horsemen, and guarded at intervals by posts to prevent vehicles from passing that way. But when later on a turnpike road was planned, it was carried out by widening and improving the causeway and removing the posts; and the Brighton coach of to-day rattles over the self-same road that was first put together a couple of centuries ago.

This ten-mile stretch of level road is notable in modern annals as the scene of the proposed sporting match between Lords Lonsdale and Shrewsbury, to drive the distance out and home, twenty miles in all, with four changes, first single, then a pair, again postillion fashion, and lastly four-in-hand. Lord Shrewsbury paid forfeit, and no wonder, for at the time appointed the wildest March weather was raging and the roads were deep in snow. The Post Office parcels coaches were both wedged up in a snowdrift on the previous night and had to be dug out. But Lord Lonsdale was on the spot, and not to disappoint the sporting crowd that had assembled for the event, he started to drive against time. The road had just been cleared by the snow-plough, and in spite of some faint opposition by the county police, who, perhaps naturally, objected to the Queen's highway being converted into a racing track, Lord Lonsdale completed his task in some minutes under the hour.

How the shades of the heroes of old of the Brighton Road must have rejoiced in such a scene! The Prince's friends the Barrymores, three brothers known as Hellgate, Newgate, and Cripplegate, with a

sister from her choice language known as Billingsgate, with Jackson, the pugilist, and the even more famous Tom Cribb, whose favourite fighting ground was close at hand—all these were familiar objects on this Brighton Road, with Sir John Lade, the Prince's Master of the Horse, who began life as a groom, and, after a brilliant career as the friend and mentor of princes of the blood, ended in the same humble capacity. Seated by Sir John, who was one of the finest coachmen of the day, would be Lady Lade, who vied with my Lady Billingsgate in the freedom of her language. The Prince's intimate circle would not be complete without Colonel Hanger, a rough and blustering fellow, but full of a rude and boisterous gaiety in which the Prince delighted, and there was Colonel Mellish, and Tommy Onslow, and poor Sheridan—a pearl among swine—with many others hardly to be mentioned with the foregoing, such as Pitt and Fox, Lord Eldon, and, later, Lord Wellington, whom, by the way, the Prince detested, with his fresh Peninsular laurels. All these were constantly dashing up and down this same Brighton Road between London and what was practically the Court of the reigning Prince.

But to return to the ten-mile course, which is bordered near Horley by a racecourse known as Gatwick Park—we may note it as the scene of an earlier sporting match, in which the Prince Regent was one of the actors. At some roysterer banquet at Carlton House, the question arose as to which were easier to drive, turkeys or geese! At that early period every trivial difference of opinion was the subject of a match or wager, and by the advice of his friend Hanger, the Prince took the side of the turkeys, and a match was at once arranged. The Prince was to drive twenty turkeys against twenty geese, which were to be piloted by Mr. Berkeley, the distance—ten miles over the flat, the very ten miles between Reigate and Crawley. The Prince was not an early riser at any time, and four p.m. was fixed for the start. As Colonel Hanger had foretold the turkeys were far more nimble and docile than the geese, and the Prince soon left his competitors far behind, and gleefully offered to back his team for any odds. But as the shadows began to lengthen on the dusty high-road, the turkeys stretched their necks first to one side and then to the other, and then, with a great whirr, one of the leading

birds flew up into a tree to roost, and one after another followed suit. In vain the Prince, who carried a long rod with a red rag fastened at the end, poked at the recreant birds, threw stones at them, and even climbed the trees to dislodge them; the whole flock was presently perched snugly out of reach, and the Prince's only hope was that the geese might be similarly affected at the approach of night. But the confederates who had arranged the whole affair were better versed in natural history than the poor Prince. Geese are nocturnal feeders, and grow more lively as the evening shades prevail, and the Prince had the mortification of seeing the hissing flock go by, with the race now at their mercy.

Such were among the traditions of the road in days gone by, but the coach of to-day takes a slightly different route, avoiding Reigate Hill, and passing through Redhill and Earlswood Common, and making a half-way pause for luncheon at the old "Chequers" at Horley. Then comes Crawley, which the humorous man on the coach asserts to be the longest village in the world, reason why: it has the sun at one end and the moon at the other, as the inn signs are there to testify. Beyond Crawley, we come to hill and forest, the stiff ascent being known unromantically as Hog Hill, beyond which the road passes between St. Leonards and Tilgate Forest, the last remains of the great forest of Andred's Weald, which stretched for seventy miles from east to west.

In the heart of this forest country is Handcross, now a great resort of cyclists, and busier perhaps at the week end than even in the palmy days of coaching, when thirty coaches passed daily in either direction. But passengers by the old stage have recorded how rows of benches were ranged in front of the inn for the use of tired travellers—they did a good deal of walking in those days, the passengers by the slow stages: up the hills for the sake of the horses, and down the hills for their own—and how the host would hospitably offer gin and gingerbread—the gin the veritable "Crow Link," at that time famous even in London gin-shops, and which had never paid a shilling to his Majesty's revenue; for the inns at Friars Oak and Handcross, it was whispered, were nocturnal resorts of the famous Sussex smugglers, who had subterranean stores in the forest hard by. Brighton itself was long a smuggling

centre, and it was whispered that the Prince himself had a weakness for "Crow Link." The last cargo run at Brighton was in 1821, at the bottom of Ship Street, while the corporation sports were going on upon the "Level" beyond the Steyne. Three hundred kegs of hollands were slung and carried off; but it was felt that the business was risky, and that Brighton had become too gay and populous for the purposes of the free-traders.

The old crawling stage of 1801 made its great halt a few miles beyond Handcross, at Staplefield, famous for black cherries and rabbit puddings. Cherry-trees are numerous still: you see them in the cottage gardens, loaded with fruit, which the owner strives to protect by all possible devices from the devouring birds. About a mile from the main-road lies Slaugham Place, a grand old mansion of the sixteenth century, now in ruins, and abandoned to bats and owls. The Coverts of Slaugham, one of whom built this beautiful but strangely placed dwelling, were among the chief landowners of the south, and could ride, according to local tradition, from Southwark to the coast over their own lands and manors every inch of the way.

At Staplefield the road divides, and the "Comet" pursues its way by the more level and, perhaps, the better road which passes through Bolney, and avoiding "the stupendous mount of Clayton," joins the main Brighton Road at the "Plough" at Pyecombe. But the other way is the old coach-road which the Prince and all the famous coachmen of old used. The Marquis of Worcester on the "Beaufort," Sir S. Vincent Cotton with the "Age," Fred Jerningham with the day mail, and coming to recent days, Selby and Godden with their amateur assistants. Selby's great feat of driving to Brighton and back from Piccadilly in seven hours fifty minutes will be still freshly remembered, although it happened as long ago as 1888, and there is a ballad about the Brighton coach of that period which begins:

They say it's just ten years ago since Selby's
coach first ran,
With good old Major Dixon on, a thorough
coaching man.

Selby and the major are both gone to their rest, but their memory still lingers with the fame of the "Old Times" on the old Brighton road.

On the old road lies Cuckfield, one of the nicest little country towns in the

kingdom, and though no longer served by the coach, it is easily accessible by Brighton rail. A small omnibus meets the train at Hayward's Heath, and the drive up to Cuckfield is the pleasantest imaginable, the road everywhere shaded by fine trees, the beech and the oak intermingling their branches with the chestnut and lime, while the ruddy limbs of stately fir-trees glower among the luxuriant verdure. Rich meadows with sleek red and white cows grazing placidly in the sunshine, pleasant country houses secluded among ancient hedges of yew and hornbeams, a footpath winding along the roadside chequered with irregular slabs of the native marble, and to all these pleasant features, as the road winds higher and higher, is added the sweet breath of the upland breeze that comes fresh from the wide sea and fragrant downs. You may not feel the breeze in the 'bus, which may happen to be a little crowded, but it comes freshly and gratefully upon you as you get out at the corner of the High Street, where the town clock is and the saddler's shop, at which our driver has something to say about "stuffing that there collar." "My dear," says a lady passenger to her sister—she had owned to having left the place, probably in infancy, but anyhow thirty years ago—"not a bit altered; the same saddler's shop, and I think the same saddler, and there was surely a collar in question, and thirty years ago!"

The quaint winding street, and the pleasant, homely houses and shops can have suffered little change these many years, nor the famous old coaching house, the "Talbot," with its many bow windows and ivy-covered front. Beneath that porch with its slender columns our esteemed Prince Regent may often have stretched his shapely limbs as he alighted from the saddle. For in his earlier years the Prince often rode between Brighton and London, and once there and back in a day. The Prince's ambition was to be a dashing cavalry officer, and he often chafed under his luxurious inaction. It later years it will be remembered that he persuaded himself that he actually had been in action, and had been present under a disguise at Waterloo.

It is difficult to keep the Prince out of the Brighton road; his form crops up in season and out of season; we see him in his low-crowned beaver, his coat of faultless cut, which has been brought in a post-

chaise from London, in charge of two experienced tailors' cutters, who try on the garment, cutting away the slightest wrinkle with a pair of sharp scissors, and subsequently fine-drawing the cut so that the coat shall become the very mould of fashion. An elaborately frilled shirt-front, light-coloured kerseys, and gaiters, complete the costume in which he mounts the giddy height of his phaeton, to which three horses are harnessed tandem, the leader ridden by a postillion, while the Prince drives the other two—a queer but rapid way of getting along which seems to have been his own invention.

But we may get rid of the spectral Regent by strolling into Cuckfield churchyard, where the handsome old Sussex church, with its fine square tower and lofty shingled spire, crowns the crest of the hill, and looks down upon a magnificent prospect; a rich country below, in chequered colours from its various crops, its woods, its homesteads, its parks, and pastures, and, hanging as it were in the air, the grand framework of the downs, crowned with ancient camps and tumuli, and stretching from Mount Harry, by Lewes, where Simon Montfort overthrew King Henry and his son, to where they break away in the great gap in which lies Arundel's proud castle.

A little way down the hill beyond the church a fine avenue of limes opens out, cool and verdant in the drought and heat of summer, leading to a charming ancient gateway of red brick, crowned by the quaint dome and pinnacle of a clock-tower. That part of the structure, they say, comes from old Slaugham Place, already mentioned, but the avenue and gateway belong to Cuckfield Place—a fine old mansion, boldly standing forth, with its many mullioned windows, its gables, quaint dormers, and high-pitched roofs, from verdant lawns and terraces gay with summer blooms, or shut in by mellow brick walls, with ancient summer-houses like watch-towers at the corners. This is the original of Harrison Ainsworth's "Rookwood"; but a cheerful, pleasant-looking place, despite its antiquity, and with none of the histrionic gloom of the novelist's creation. But the name is a good one, and imparts a thrill which the novel itself hardly intensifies. But sitting in Cuckfield churchyard as the shades of evening come on, one recognises the descriptive force of the title as a great colony of rooks rises from the ploughed

land below, and accompanied by whirling flights of fieldfares, spreads itself as a cloud across the sky, and cawing and brawling, hovers for a while over the ancient groves of Cuckfield Park, before it settles with a grand united caw, and is heard no more.

Quiet, indeed, is the night at Cuckfield when the clatter of shop shutters has ceased, and when young Cuckfield has exhausted its quiver of sarcastic shafts, and the whole town has sunk into peaceful slumber. But the old church clock chimes out the hours lustily, and in the small hours of a morning there is a refreshing sound, unheard for months, of rain awishing against the window-panes. It is the breaking of the drought with a vengeance, and for the benefit of such poor mortals as have essayed to traverse the Brighton Road. Yet the refrain of the downpour persuades to slumber, when, b-r-r-r ! a roar and a rattle comes down the street as if the fire brigade of heaven had broken loose. Naturally there is a rush to the window, when, behold ! it is the parcels mail that is whirling past, with its four stout horses, and the great red van that glows, all dripping wet, with the red eyes of its lamps, which are growing dim in the grey daylight. All is drip and splash on dark roofs and grey house-fronts, shuttered and curtained closely, and all the colour departs from the scene as the glowing red van clatters round the corner and disappears.

It is drip, drip, at breakfast-time, and then there is a break, the clouds move off in huge masses, and the great ridges of the downs appear, their summits covered with wreathing white vapours, suggesting :

Mountains on whose barren breast
The labouring clouds do often rest.

Stretched before us is the whole of the Appian way, even to where it climbs the dizzy height of Clayton Hill. But first over hill and dale, by Anstey and Riddens farm, across St. John's Common and to Friars Oak, a famous coaching house, just before the forty-third milestone. When you have crowned the summit of Clayton Hill, with its magnificent views over weald and down, a hill often fatal to rash cyclists, and noted for a sad railway disaster in the tunnel beneath it—well, then Brighton begins, with red villas and creeper-covered cottages in every chalky nook, and so along by Pangdean and Patcham with its memories of fierce combats between smugglers and revenue men lang syne, and

through Preston's narrow vale all crowded up with roofs. Here is the Steyne, where fishermen once dried their nets and hauled up their boats in rough weather, and the funny domes of the Pavilion, which, as Sydney Smith said, look as if St. Paul's had pupped.

Again we have the spectre of the Prince thrusting himself like King Charles's head into the memorial. The Prince, who first came down to Brighton in 1782, on a visit to Uncle Cumberland, who lived in a house near the Steyne, a modest residence with a narrow drive in front and gateposts against which, one day, Tommy Onslow managed to scrape the wheels of his phaeton. Now, Tommy was nothing if not a whip, as the old verse records :

What can Tommy Onslow do ?
Drive a phaeton and two.
Can Tommy Onslow do no more ?
Yes, drive a phaeton and four.

And Tommy felt so keenly the chaff of Uncle Cumberland and nephew, who were looking out of window and laughing "ready to split," that he at once shouted out the offer of a wager to drive his phaeton and four, mark you, twenty times in and out and round the drive without touching, and won the match and saved his reputation.

In contrast to these jovial days of youth we may bring in a record from Greville, who, in 1821, dines with George, now King, at the Pavilion, in gaudy splendour, but all cold and dull, in spite of the King's coarse jokes at table. The after part is duller still, as George "sits by Lady Conyngham and plays patience all the evening."

We may still get a feeling of the Regency days as we stroll down to the "Old Ship" and see the "Comet" start, gay and bright with its spanking team and gentleman whip, and loaded atop with smart people. Merrily sounds the horn and away goes the coach, to show you all the Brighton Road at a glance, and land you in busy London in time for "afternoon tea."

THE ETERNAL PAST.

A STORY IN FIVE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

"I AM here, grandmother."
The old lady looked up from her invalid chair.

"Bless my soul, you look thirty."
"I am not far off it."

"Nonsense, nonsense, you are a girl, a pretty girl."

"They say at home that I am a very plain woman."

"Yes, that's the sort of thing they always say at home. You can't be old yet for you have never been young. We must take life in its proper order. I saw you when you were nineteen; you were not young then."

Hilary laughed a little and did not say how very young she had been the year before.

"Your father had just married again, and brought a new family into the house. You were pushed aside; no wonder you were wretched."

It did not seem worth while to say that it was not her father's marriage that had made her wretched and old at nineteen. Mrs. Deane went on speaking:

"Do you know why I sent for you?"

"We supposed you were worse."

"So you came to hand the medicine bottles, read the sermons, 'perform the last offices' for a fractious old woman. Yes, and you'd do all this cheerfully. It's unnatural, shocking; well, you won't have to do anything of the sort."

"What do you want with me, then?"

Hilary spoke drearily, as if it were a matter of course that whatever she was wanted to do must be more or less disagreeable.

Old Mrs. Deane grasped the arms of her chair, and pulled herself gradually into a sitting posture, then to her feet, and so stood upright for a moment; then she dropped back on her couch chuckling, while Hilary exclaimed:

"Good gracious, grandmother!"

"Ah," said Mrs. Deane, "I hadn't done that for a long time, had I? Till a few weeks ago I thought that I was fixed on that sofa for life, and not much more life either, so it occurred to me that I was tired of it all, and I'd get myself either killed or cured. So I sent for a doctor—a specialist, a great man. There was an operation—we won't talk of it—it was nasty; but the result is, I'm cured, not killed. I have several years of pleasant life before me. That's a good thing for me, but it's very hard on you, Hilary."

"Hard on me!"

"Why, yes; you are the only relation I really care for. I have been sorry for you all these years, because you didn't have your chance like other girls; but invalids are selfish creatures, and I did nothing for you."

You see, I always thought I should die soon, and leave you what little I have, and then you would be provided for comfortably. Now I'm cured you won't have the money these twenty years, so you will have to be married. I made up my mind that directly I got over the shock of the operation, I would have you to stay with me, and give you your chance. That's the only fair thing to do."

Married? A chance? Long ago a girl of eighteen had walked among the trees in a dark garden with a lover. That girl had thought of marriage, very reverently and sweetly, as a thing as certain as it was beautiful, but that was very long ago.

The old lady's view of things was too startling to be answered off-hand.

"Do you hear, Hilary? I am going to marry you to some one."

"You don't suppose that any one will marry me," she said dully; "I am too old and too plain."

"Nonsense, you are just the average age, and have the average amount of good looks. All you want is the average opportunities. A girl is never plain when a man begins to tell her she is pretty. You have never tried that."

But she had once, only so long ago that probably the effect had gone off.

"I know what county society is like," the old woman went on. "Only one man among thirteen girls, and he with thirteen she relations mounting guard over him. Here you will find things very different. There is a new sort of girl about now, but she hasn't penetrated into the remote districts. You will find plenty of men, and their women won't be greedy of them. Why shouldn't you be loved and married as well as any one else?"

Well, why not? The idea was wonderfully pleasant. It had been beautiful to be loved once. Why not again? Had she been too ready to believe that all her life was wasted because, when she was a child, a man of the world had amused himself? She looked at the sharp old woman doubtfully.

"But you said I looked thirty!"

She spoke breathlessly, eager to know the extent of the odds against her.

"So you do, and faded, and dowdy; no wonder, considering the life you have led in the country, and I have no doubt that your amiable half-sisters, having no other attraction but that of youth, have flung their seventeen and eighteen years of un-gainliness in your face till you feel ninety,

and old for your age at that. Look at your frock—scrumped and dowdy, tight across the chest, and loose in the shoulders, and wrinkled round the waist. You'll feel another girl when you're dressed properly. Catherine will rearrange you—Catrin's my maid, she is very clever. Look at your hair, it's like wet hay; and your complexion, why, that's rather like wet hay too; but all the same, you've the material for a pretty girl, you only want making up."

"Making up!" Hilary was frightened at the words. "What, paint, and hair-dye, and—cotton wool? I would rather be as I am."

"Gracious me! Paint, hair-dye. I was speaking figuratively. I meant, you want to make the best of yourself, wear light clothes, well cut, full in the right place. And that complexion now, it isn't natural, it's the result of ill-health and low spirits; well, there are natural remedies. Catrin knows them—not cosmetics, tonics. And your hair, a little attention and discretion is all it wants, that and the curling irons. Your eyelashes and eyebrows have lost colour, too."

"They never had any colour."

"Hadn't they?—well, they looked all right when you were nineteen. I have no doubt that Catrin will make them look all right now; not by dye—oh dear, no! Dyes are dreadful things—vulgar—dangerous—got lead in them—give you paralysis of the brain—but one might improve them by a tonic."

A little dimple showed itself on Hilary's thin cheek.

"Of course a dye would be quite harmless if one called it a tonic," she said.

"Oh, you've life in you, yet," said the old lady. "You just put yourself in Catrin's hands and she and I will do our best for you. I'm not a rich woman. I can't give you what is called a season in town—besides, the season is over—but we can have a good time. I have taken a cottage at Marlow to be near some nice people I want you to know who are going to spend two months there. May, their name is; three sisters and a brother, who live together. The father is dead and the mother lives in Algiers—something of an invalid, I fancy. One of the sons lives with her, but he is coming over for the summer. The elder brother is engaged and so are two of the girls, but they are sure to have men friends and ask them down, and if not, Charles May, the brother

from Algiers, is a nice, well-bred lad. The Mays are the new sort of girls. Each of them "does something," painting or writing, you know—stand up for their own sex—mean to have a good time, and are willing that all other girls shall have a good time too. They are well-grown, charming girls, but after a fortnight—in Catrin's hands—you'll be as nice-looking as any of them. This is what I mean by giving you a chance—you have been a good girl for a long while—now you shall have a try at being a happy one."

CHAPTER II.

ALL the young people were walking after dinner in the woods. Mrs. Deane had stayed indoors.

"There are so many of you," she said, "that you can chaperon each other."

The engaged couples were on in front. Nan, the eldest girl, had called Betty to walk with her and Joe. Hilary had soon seen that Mrs. Deane had described the May girls truly; they were not all like the girls she had met in the second-rate society she had known. They did not mount guard over their beautiful, young, unengaged brother at all; they made him opportunities; they were making him an opportunity now, and he was taking it.

"I am saying all this very badly, am I not?"

"It's a little amateurish," Hilary admitted.

He laughed.

"Well, I don't care how I say it, so long as it is said—so long as you let me go on saying it. There is nothing new left, you know. Even Shakespeare found that out when he was making love himself—in earnest. You remember the sonnets? 'Fair, kind, and true is all my argument.' Well, what more did he want? That's enough for any one to say."

"She wasn't fair at all, you know."

"Never mind her; you are—that's what I want to say. 'Fair, kind, and true is all my argument.'"

"And she wasn't exactly what one would call kind, either."

"Oh, yes, she was. Kind meant accepting the man. But she wasn't true, and you will be—if you say yes, that is. You haven't said yes, but you will, won't you?"

Dark night, thick-growing trees, a lover's low voice—she had had it all before, perhaps that was why it seemed a little stale and tame to her. But she listened.

"I don't want to hurry you. There is plenty of time. I don't sail till Thursday, you know, but I want to have a day or two left after we are engaged before I go. Don't stop me; if you had been going to say no you would have said it before I had got as far as this. You are going abroad with Mrs. Deane for the winter, so am I—I always go abroad for the winter. Now, if we were to go together— Oh, how badly I am saying all this!"

"I think you are saying it well enough."

"So long as you know what I mean, so long as you are content to listen to me, what does it matter how I say it? Do you know your hair turns lighter in the dark? That is all I can see of you, that and your white frock. It is so sweet of you to go on wearing that frock because you know I love it. Perhaps it was not because you knew I love it?"

"It was."

It was, for again she was experiencing the truth of that wise old woman's words; the praise of this beautiful young man made her feel pretty, and she was eager to justify it.

"Ah, that's almost saying yes, isn't it? One couldn't exactly bring an action for breach of promise on the strength of it, but it's encouragement, you know. Mrs. Deane will be pleased, won't she? My people will say I am too young; I can't help that. What is the good of love at all if one can't have it when one enjoys it most?"

"You are very young."

"That's why you like me, isn't it? You wouldn't like me if I were an old fogey with spectacles and the gout. I shall come to both, doubtless—they are in the family. Lots of disagreeable things are in the family. I expect I should be intensely disagreeable if I were old."

"You are younger than I am."

"Yes, you tell me so every other day, don't you? I think you are quite conceited about your age, you know it becomes you. It has given that strange, wise look to your eyes. It is there, even when you laugh; that was what I saw first when I met you; it bewilders and fascinates me. I can't understand it."

Ah, but she could! It was the inevitable law of attracting contrasts. He loved her for the wisdom of sorrow in her face, just as she would have loved him for his beautiful foolish youth, if she could only have forgotten that garden—long ago.

"You are a boy," she said.

"I am not—really you know—I am twenty-five."

"Why, I thought Nan was only twenty-five."

"Oh, well, I forgot; well, for all social purposes so she is, you know. I don't want to contradict her, she may be twenty-five as long as she likes, only when it comes to being married I insist on my right to be twenty-five, too."

"It hasn't come to being married."

"But it will, won't it? Do you think I am not serious enough? I am very serious. How can one put what I am feeling now into mere words? Words were all worn out long ago. I wish we were like the birds, limited to a sound or two, so that we should only express ourselves by tones. Words are such ugly sounds to express our love. One says dear—it means so little; there is darling, sweetheart, love. Stand here a moment while I say them all over, and we see which is sweetest. Darling. Oh, it's not so meaningless after all; and then there is your name. Hilary, Hilary, my darling."

"Ah!"

He had laid his hand on her arm to stop her, for they had walked almost through the little wood. The others had come to a standstill on the edge of the river; it was a little brighter there, for the water caught and reflected what starlight there was. The others were just out of earshot. He said the words again:

"Hilary, my darling, Hilary."

She did not cry out again, but she shivered. That garden, that dark garden, long ago! Their feet had sounded in the damp grass just as they were sounding now. The trees had all turned their leaves inwards, and whispered to themselves just as they did to-night. There was a river there, too, and a lover who said her name again and again and again, making it sound like the words of a song. And this boy with the beautiful delicate face was giving her honest first love.

Nan saw them and called to Hilary to sing something.

"This is almost the last night of summer, and it is so dark and still that we are getting mournful," she said. "Sing to us, there's a dear girl."

"Bother them; don't," said Charlie under his breath. "At least, answer me first, and then sing."

But what should she answer? Till now, marrying him had seemed just a natural seizing of her first real chance of

happiness, now it seemed a positive wrong to his unclouded youth ; but it would be cruel to disappoint him. If only she could have forgotten that girl in the garden.

The girls called again for a song, and he entreated for his answer. To delay answering him she sang :

" In Heaven, when I was young,
The wild woods sung,
And the breezes came and went
With their soft delicious scent;
And oh ! I was content
In Heaven when I was young."

Behind them in the woods they heard a burst of laughter—riotous laughter—but softened by distance and the darkness.

" It's a troupe of Bacchanals who have lost their way in the woods ; never mind them. Go on," said Charlie.

" On earth, now I am old,
The days are cold,
And the flowers lie crushed in the fields
about
With cruel rain, and rout ;
And oh ! my lamp is out
On earth now I am old."

There was a sound of voices and footsteps among the trees ; the girls all drew together, reminded half unpleasantly how late it was. Charlie moved nearer to Hilary.

" What a sad song !" he said. " Why did you sing it ? "

A little company of black figures moved out of the black shadow into the dim light by the river, and next moment Hilary heard a voice close to her exclaiming her name.

" Hilary—Hilary Deane." And next moment in a quite conventional tone : " This is an unexpected pleasure, Miss Deane. Are you staying here, or have you only missed your train as we have ? "

" Staying here."

She was glad he had asked her a question ; one can always answer a question, and otherwise she might have been unable to speak.

" A friend of yours, Miss Deane ? " asked Charlie, irritated at the interruption, and by way of holding his place at her side against an apparent stranger.

" Mr. Beckwith—Mr. May," Hilary said in a strangely distinct tone. " Mr. Beckwith is an old acquaintance of mine whom I have not seen for a long while, not since I was a child."

CHAPTER III.

" IT seems the most impossible thing to meet you here."

" Did you think I was dead ? " said Hilary, laughing.

" We have missed our train," said Beckwith deliberately, as if trying to give himself time to realise the meeting. " Some of us have gone to find rooms, and the rest have come for a walk. Our parties seem to be fraternising. Some of my friends appear to know yours, apparently. They are all going homewards ; we had better follow."

" Interrupted effectually now," muttered Charlie into her other ear. " We can't get rid of this middle-aged bore just yet, I suppose. I am not impatient. You will not say no, will you ? But we must have a few words together still to-night ; they will be such nice words."

" These are rather interesting people that I am with," Beckwith was saying ; " A trifle too much what one would call ' smart,' perhaps. We are only down for the day. Now that boy has gone I can talk to you, Hilary. I wish I could see you. Are you much changed ? "

" Oh, yes, I am changed ; the years change all of us. That boy, as you call him, spoke of you as a middle-aged bore."

He laughed a little.

" You didn't think so of me once, Hilary."

" No," she said ; and the tone might have meant either reproach or indifference.

" I suppose that means you have not thought of me at all ? "

" Oh, no, it does not. I have thought of you very often."

" And I of you, Hilary. You don't know how I have longed for your forgiveness lately."

" You have done without it a long while."

" Hilary ! "

" Will you say Miss Deane ? "

" I beg your pardon. Yes. I have lost all right to call you by a name that was once very dear to me. Miss Deane, if I made you unhappy—it is almost an impertinence to assume that I did."

" Oh, no, it is not," she said coldly. " I was a child, and you were the first comer. It was only natural that I should have believed in you. It is no shame to me that you made me unhappy."

" Well, if I made you unhappy then, it is fit that you should know that you are avenged. I have been thinking a great deal of you. I have had a lesson, Hilary ; if I had realised long ago how you would suffer, I would not have acted as I did, and if I had not, I should not have been punished as I am."

"Do you mean," she said, a little scornfully, "that you love some one now who is as false to you as you were to me?"

"Heaven forbid," he said. "No, it is even worse than that, Hilary. She—she is not free."

He said the words with a sort of dramatic reverence, and, prompt to the cue, a man and a woman came along through the trees towards them. Beckwith drew Hilary back into the shadow and stood silent as they passed to join the larger group.

Some one said, "Well, have you got rooms?" Some one else said, "Yes, horrid rooms." There were introductions, scraps of explanation, disjointed words, laughter, loud and unmusical some of it, too loud and harsh for even the moonlight to soften it. Beckwith went on speaking.

"I must tell you. When I met you to-night I was thinking of you, longing for you to know it, that you might be satisfied and forgive me. Forgive me, why, you would pity me if you understood. I do not complain, I would not be happier if I could while she is wretched. Look at her, Hilary, that is the woman who has avenged you."

"Does she love you?"

He answered her in indignant reproach.

"I think you could not have looked at her."

She did not reply to that. She had looked, but had seen nothing that to her thinking could reasonably account for the tone he was taking. Only a small, fair woman, with light-blue eyes, a meek expression, and a very small mouth. Hilary was not impressed.

"Oh, yes; I looked at her," she said. "Is that man with the horrid, coarse laugh her husband?"

The party was coming nearer. Beckwith put his hand on Hilary's arm, and answered under his breath.

"He? No. He is a man who should not be allowed to come within sight of her. He should not be tolerated in the same hemisphere, and he is her husband's chief friend."

A little bitter laugh stayed on Hilary's lips. If the situation were amusing, it was also pathetic. If this man had posed as the cynical man of the world in love with innocence in the past, if he was posing as pure reverence in love with bound virtue now, the second pose was a fit complement of the first, and the one had been and the other was real to him. She remembered how

he had caught her childish romance then by vague hints of a sorrowful past; now he was trying to reach her pity by confession of a tragic present. He was a man who could not be content without a woman to be sorry for him. Oh, yes; she was changed indeed, for now she saw right through her old lover, and all there was in him of heart and brain, and did not feel very angry with him.

"I am really sorry for you, Teddy," she said.

"Women are so sweet; so wonderfully forgiving."

He took her hand and pressed it gratefully; she let the little laugh come then.

"I did not say I had forgiven you; that's another matter."

"Oh, perhaps I can scarcely hope for forgiveness."

There was a certain amount of gratified vanity in the tone. She laughed again. She was so grateful to him for his faults, and for letting his faults be so apparent. The revelation was so pertinent.

Charlie, some twenty paces behind, had just said something that had brought on him the indignation of some one, a woman with a harshly coquettish voice.

"You shockingly rude person. How dare you speak so to an old woman like me? And what are you doing out in the damp at this time of night? If your mother were here you wouldn't dare—what do you suppose she would say?"

He was only a boy, and he gave a boy's answer:

"I shouldn't object to anything my mother said."

"Now, that's as good as telling me to mind my own business," said the coquettish voice, "and all the while I am acting a mother's part to him myself. How is your poor sweet mother, by the way?"

"She's in Algiers."

"Oh, yes, of course; and you are going too—as usual—for the winter. What a good son you are, to give up the season year after year to spend your time with an invalid mother."

Charlie said "Oh," in a tone of intense irritation at being discussed, and the harsh voice went on:

"Well, mind and don't catch a fatal cold before you go to her. Tell your mother I asked after her when you write and give her my love."

"I will tell her I met you."

"That's our hostess," said Beckwith in a tone of depreciation. "Mrs. Patton."

She's well enough." He gave a shrug of the shoulders, suggesting that the last half of his speech was intended to invite comment. Hilary did not answer. The hostess did not interest her. She was loving Charlie's boyish insolence and impatient endurance. He had positively no self-control—he couldn't pose at all.

He was at her side a moment later, speaking in an irritated undertone.

"Dreadful woman. Everybody is interrupting us. Give her love to my mother, indeed. Invalid! She's nothing of the sort, but Algiers suits her. One would think she always went about mournfully in a shawl, groaning."

Beckwith, on the other side of Hilary, could not see the boy, the place was so dark, but he heard a word or two, and with a laugh moved a little further off.

"She's always like that," went on Charlie, "always saying she's old, and wanting some one to contradict her. She lives about three miles from us at home, and will come to see us. I detest her—we all do—but my mother is so sweetly well-bred she can't get rid of her. I shouldn't wonder if that was what first sent her to Algiers."

"She knows you very well. What was she saying about your not being allowed out in the damp?"

"Oh, rubbish; she always talks rubbish. Hilary, their rooms are just at the corner; we shall get rid of them there. You won't let this man go home with you? You will come with me? See how patient I have been. That speaks well for the sort of husband I shall make, doesn't it? Hilary, if you don't get rid of this man, I shall throw the whole party into the lock—one after the other."

Here the three came suddenly out of the darkness. Hilary turned and waited for the others under the gas-lamp. Charlie turned back again. Beckwith saw him distinctly, and was very much astonished. What! was this splendid young man his cast-off love's lover? Then he looked at Hilary, and his second astonishment answered the first.

"Hilary, you have improved—how pretty you are—how smart—to think of your growing up like this, though you were always a pretty child."

Hilary smiled, deliciously conscious of the truth of his words. She did not know if it was the result of Charlie's praise, or Catrin's "natural remedies"; but she felt well-dressed, and handsome.

He stood staring at her amazed.

"Little shy Hilary grown into this; and you said you were changed. I knew you by your voice, Hilary; but I doubt if I should have known you had I seen you."

"Well, we do know each other—at last."

The words bewildered him. He seemed to feel all sorts of subtle meanings in them.

She was looking at him. He was not changed much. Charlie had exaggerated a little when he called him middle-aged. There was the same turn of the head, the same weak shoulders, the same sensitive hands and tired, cynical face—every characteristic which had fascinated that girl long ago in the garden. But this place was not the old garden, and she was not that girl of eighteen.

"And now it is too late to change," Beckwith was saying. "My lot is marked out; I am chosen by Fate to bear a great burden, Hilary. I trust I shall bear it worthily."

In her clear reading of him the words did not sound ridiculous, only pitiful. She said, "Poor Teddy! I am so sorry!" and was angry with herself that she was not sorrier.

The group had divided; three or four men were crossing the lock talking. Beckwith was still appealing to her in undertones, but she did not notice what he said. She was listening to the strange men. She fancied she heard Beckwith's name and a word that sounded like "infatuation."

"The past was sweeter than the present is, Hilary, and Heaven only knows what the future will be. I hope with all my heart that yours will be less sad than mine must needs be. That was a very good-looking boy who was with you when I came. Do you know him well?"

"Oh, very well."

"Your tone says a great deal, Hilary. Believe me, I am glad to hear what I fancy it says. He is your lover?"

"Yes."

"And you mean to marry him?"

"Yes."

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